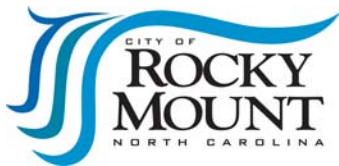


Will More Stop Signs Slow Traffic on Our Street?

STOP signs installed in wrong places usually create more problems than they solve.

Many requests are received for STOP signs to interrupt traffic or to slow speeding vehicles. However, studies across the country show that there is a high number of intentional violations when STOP signs are installed as nuisances or speed breakers. Studies show that speed was reduced in the immediate vicinity of nuisance STOP signs. However, speeds were higher between intersections than before the signs were installed. This is caused by motorists "making up for lost time." So-called nuisance STOP signs also increase air pollution, waste fuel, and create more traffic noise.

Most drivers are reasonable and prudent. When confronted with unreasonable and unnecessary restrictions, motorists are more likely to violate them, and they usually develop a contempt for all traffic signs...potentially with tragic results.



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Answers to Your Traffic Safety Questions



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Will Children at Play Signs Help Slow Traffic?

While it may seem that this sign would protect neighborhood youngsters, facts indicate otherwise. Although some communities have posted these signs in residential areas, no evidence exists to prove that these signs help reduce pedestrian accidents or lower speeds.

Studies have shown that many signs in residential areas, which are installed to “warn” people of normal conditions, fail to improve safety.

Pedestrians can get a false sense of security since drivers often disregard these signs. Signs that encourage parents or children to believe they have added protection (which they do not) can do more harm than good. Children should not be encouraged to play in the street. Federal standards reject these signs because they openly suggest that playing in the street is acceptable.

Since children live on nearly every residential block, there would have to be signs on every residential street. Blocks with no signs might imply that no children live there, so it is okay to speed.

Rocky Mount ordinances do not recognize “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs. Specific warnings for schools and crosswalks are available for use where they clearly serve a purpose. Warning signs can be effective tools if used sparingly and only to warn motorists of uncommon hazards that are not apparent to drivers.



Will a Lower Speed Limit Help Reduce Travel Speeds?

It is a common myth that installing a lower speed limit will cause drivers to slow down and reduce accidents. Facts indicate otherwise.

Research conducted throughout the country over several decades has shown that drivers are influenced by the type of street and the current traffic conditions, and not the posted speed limit. When a speed limit sign is not posted, Rocky Mount’s basic speed limit of 35 mph still applies. It requires that a person drive at a speed that is reasonable and prudent under existing conditions.

In addition, the posted speed limit merely constitutes the maximum speed permissible along a given street. If conditions dictate that a person drive at a slower speed (e.g. poor visibility, work zone, etc.), it is incumbent upon every driver to proceed at a speed that is reasonable and prudent for existing driving conditions so as to avoid colliding with any person, object, or vehicle.



Will a Traffic Signal Reduce Intersection Crashes?

Traffic signals don’t always prevent accidents. In most cases, accidents and severe injuries increase after they are installed. When signals are installed, right angle collisions are generally reduced, but total accidents increase, especially rear-end collisions. Traffic engineers consider the following points when deciding if a traffic signal will help more than it will hurt:

- Does the number of vehicles entering the intersection create congestion?
- Is traffic so heavy that drivers on the side street try to cross when it is unsafe?
- Does the number of school children or pedestrians crossing the street require special controls? If so, is a traffic signal the best solution?
- Will a traffic signal allow for a smooth flow of traffic and avoid negatively impacting a nearby signal?
- Does an intersection’s accident history indicate a signal will reduce the possibility of a collision?

Traffic Engineers compare existing conditions against nationally accepted standards established after years of study throughout the country. Under these conditions, a signal is more likely to operate effectively. If established standards are not met, conditions may result which cause more crashes.

